

[John Burns]

1

[????]

Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist.#7

Page #1

FEC

John Burns, officing at Suite 704, First National Bank Bldg., Fort Worth, Tex., was born on a cattle ranch in De Witt [co.?], Tex. He graduated from A & M. College in 1904. Later, he was head of the Animal Husbandry Dept. of Texas A. & M. College for several years. Resigning from that position, he accepted a position as Secretary of the Texas Hereford Associates, terminating same to become Field Representative of the American [Short?] Horn Breeders Association. He next accepted, in 1930, the office of Secretary-Manager of the Texas Livestock Marketing Association, which operated in the principal livestock markets throughout the United States. He terminated this connection in 1933 to accept the senior trusteeship and general management of the S.B.Burnett Estate, giving his personal attention to the estate's vast ranch and other business. His story of the range follows:

"I was born in De Witt co., Tex., at a ranch home. My early life was spent on a ranch. My father earned his livelihood dealing in cattle. The Texas Longhorn was still the principal breed of cattle, and those critters grazed on an open range. Also, the general roundup still prevailed. I was reared in the cattle business. After completing my elementary and

Library of Congress

high school education, I entered the Texas A. & M. College and was graduated from the institution in 1904.

Following my graduation, I became associated with the Animal Husbandry Dept. of A. & M. and later was head of the department for a few years. My next venture was to accept the secretaryship for the Texas Hereford Breeders Association. Following this position, I became Field Representative for the American Short Horn Breeders Association. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas - 2 I resigned this field representative position in 1930 to accept the Secretary-Manager office for the Texas Livestock Marketing Association, which operated in the principal markets of the United States.

"I finally became settled in my present position in 1933, which is senior trustee and general manger of the S.B.Burnett [Est.?] The estate has been built from the cattle industry, which is still an important part of the vast S.B.Burnett Est.

"The estate includes extensive holdings in oil and gas producing properties, banking and real estate holdings not connected with the estate's ranch land. The real estate devoted to ranching consists of a third of a million acres and on which are located the Four Six (6666) ranches.

"To give a true picture, as I possibly can, of the Four Six ranches, I shall give a brief outline of S.B.Burnett's history as it is related to the cattle industry.

"Samuel Burk Burnett, familiarly known as Burk Burnett, or Capt. Burnett, was born in Bates co., [Mo?], Jan. 1, 1849. He came to Texas with his father, Jerry Burnett, in 1859, immediately following the bloody Ruffin and Jayhawker's raids, which started in 1857, which depredations resulted in devastating the homes of many people of the locality, including the Burnett's.

"Jerry Burnett traveled from Missouri to Texas in a covered wagon, the chief [mode?] of transportation these day. The family settled on Denton Creek, in Denton co. The father,

Library of Congress

Jerry Burnett, started immediately to acquire a herd of cattle. He seen had a small herd which increased rapidly in numbers.

“The range was open and free in those days, with an abundance 3 of grass and water, and it was in this setting that Burk Burnett acquired his [?] experiences which started him on his successful career in the cattle business.

“Burk was among the first men to drive a herd North up the trail to Kansas. He took a herd of cattle up the trail for his father in 1867. [He?], at that time, was only 18 years old. Though this was his first experience as trail boss, he had gone up the trail the previous year as a trail hand.

“Soon after he returned from making the drive for his father, he started his own cattle business. He was successful in his venture and acquired a tract of land in Wichita county, where he located his headquarters, and in the vicinity of the present town of Burkburnett, named for him.

“He purchased the Four Six brand along with about 100 head of cattle, which were carrying it, from Frank Crowley, of Denton co., about 1871. He moved these cattle to his Wichita county ranch. There are several stories told relating to how Burnett made the purchase of the Four Six brand. Among these stories is one to the effect of the brand and cattle was won in a card game on a hand containing four sixes and considering the four sixes lucky, he adopted '6666' as his brand. I shall leave the reader to draw on his own imagination and decide what the facts are. The records show there was a transaction whereby Burnett purchased the brand and 100 head of cattle from one Frank Crowley. Even if it has been a lot of brand, it has been a successful one.

“Captain Burk Burnett advanced rapidly in the cattle business and became extensively engaged in handling steers. From the early 4 80s to the turn of the century he grazed thousands of steers in the [Kiowa?] and Comanche reservations of the Indian Territory ([now?] Oklahoma). Knowing, that in order to successfully graze cattle in the Indians'

Library of Congress

reservations he must have their friendship, he cultivated their good will. [Quanah?] Parker, Chief of the Comanches, was Burk's friend, and, through Quanah, Burnett settled many disputes and wielded a large influence in behalf of other Texas cattlemen with the Indians.

"Through his ability to make friends, Burk had the respect of many influential men, and one among them was the late Theodore Roosevelt. When the Federal Government was preparing to open the Territory to homesteaders, about 1900, the Government ordered the cattlemen to vacate their leases immediately, in the Kiowa and Comanche country. Captain Burnett made a trip to Washington for the purpose of securing an extension of time when the vacating order should take effect. He succeeded in making arrangements, through the efforts of Theodore Roosevelt, then President, in his behalf, whereby the time was extended two years. This extension gave him and other cattlemen time to move and dispose of their herds in a more satisfactory and orderly manner.

"Soon after the right to lease ranch land terminated in the Kiowa and Comanche territory, Burnett began to acquire grazing land in Texas. He began to acquire his Texas land in 1900, by the purchase of the old ['nights?'] ranch, consisting of 140,000 acres located in King county, from the Louisville Land and Cattle Company, of Louisville, Ky. On this tract of land he established his Four Six ranch. He continued to acquire additional tracts 5 until he owned, in a solid block, 207,895 acres in King county. He bought the Dixon Creek ranch in 1903, composed of 107,520 acres and located just south of the Canadian River in [Carson?] and Hutchinson counties of the Texas Panhandle. These properties, together, comprise approximately one third of a million acres and constitute the Four Six ranch property. On the Four Six ranches. Normally, are ranged about 20,000 head of cattle and 200 head of horses.

"S.B.Burnett discontinued operation of his Wichita county ranch in 1910, at which time he leased it to his son, T.[?].Burnett of Iowa Park, Tex.

Library of Congress

"That Captain Burnett was outstanding as a cattleman and business man is evident by what he accomplished. It is obvious that he possessed a keen judgment, a far sightedness, exceptional business ability and energy. He not only acquired one of the leading ranch properties of Texas, but built up one of the best improved commercial beef herds in the state.

"Texas, particularly that vast area known as "West Texas", has become generally and favorably known as a breeding ground for the best grades of Hereford stockers and feeder cattle. Many districts within this great region, lying west of the 98 meridian, have become especially noted and even famous for the high quality white face calves and yearlings produced. Organized effort on the part of enterprising breeders of this section, as well as the merits of their [wares?], have helped tremendously in putting the district and its cattle to the fore. There are many ranches in this territory, but among the larger and best known cattle ranches 6 of West Texas are the following:

"The [Matador?] Land & Cattle Co., the [Swonsen?] Land & Cattle Co., the Pitchfork Land & Cattle Co., the [?].T.[Waggoner?] Estate and the Estate of S.B.Burnett

"On the 207,895 acres composing the King county ranch of the Burnett Est., normally, around 8,000 breeding cows are maintained, along with 425 registered Hereford bulls. The annual calf [crop?] generally runs between 5,000 and 6,000 head and, in some seasons, running as high as 80 per cent. It has, however, run as low as 60 per cent. In a large measure, the range condition during breeding season determines the percentage of the calf crop. The percentage of the calf crop is a very important factor in determining ranch income, and to maintain it at a high average is our aim.

"Calf weaning begins about November and all the calves spend their first winter on the King county ranch, generally on the range without supplementary [feed?].

Library of Congress

"About the middle of April these calves, which are then yearlings, are gathered. The steers are trailed to [Narcisse?], on the [?]. A. & P. railroad, about 25 miles from the ranch, where they are loaded on the cars and shipped to the Dixon Creek ranch, a distance of about 175 miles.

"The heifers are scrutinized for breeders, to be used as replacements. As a rule, around 1,000 head are retained for this purpose annually. The rest of the heifers are then sold as stockers or feeders, and delivered in June. Most of these heifers are delivered to Wertheimer and Degan, S.Omaha, Neb., who 7 are among the most extensive commercial feeders in the entire country.

"The steers are generally run on the Dixon Creek ranch until they are three years old, at which age they are sold to feeder buyers for Fall delivery. For the past several years these steers have been bought by the prominent feeders of Fort Worth, Tex.

"Of course, in addition to selling the yearling [called?] heifers and three year old steers, there are old cows and bulls and some unmerchantable cattle to be [culled?] out and disposed of each year. These, a by-product of the industry, are generally from 8 to 10 years of age and constitute from 10 to 15 per cent of the breeding herd. They are generally shipped direct to the central markets, either by truck or rail.

"There is always plenty of work to do on a cow ranch. On the King county ranch there is maintained a cowhand crew of 12 to 15 men, with a fully equipped chuck wagon, and a remuda of 125 to 150 horses, a fencing crew of three men, a windmill man, a truck driver, and a farming crew of three or four men.

"Calf branding generally starts about the middle of May and is continued until about July 1st. [When?] calves are branded they are also ear marked. The bull calves are castrated, except these saved for breeding, and all are vaccinated against blackleg.

Library of Congress

"Branding and ear marking is just as essential today as during the days of the open range. Today we have the modern cattle thief, using the modern auto-truck, and it is only a few minutes work for them to cut a fence, load on some Herefords, and drive away. This modern method leaves no hoof marks to trail, as the early day method did when cattle were drifted off the range. The only chance to apprehend the cattle now is at the markets, where the Cattlemen's Association maintains brand inspectors. However, the thieves, as a rule, do not sell the stolen cattle in the regular markets but to individual buyers. We are compelled to maintain a constant watch for cattle rustlers.

"Following our branding and castration operations, the dehorning is done. However, the dehorning is not done until early the following Spring, generally when the cattle are coming two years old. The delay in dehorning is followed because of the nature of the country where the King county ranch is located. The country is brushy and frequently the screw [worms?] are bad. Under such condition dehorning has proved impracticable during branding season, because of the danger of infection. The delayed practice has proved successful.

"During July and August the cow outfit is usually put to work repairing and building surface tanks, assisting the farm hands in harvesting [feed?] crops, filling trench silos and other general work.

"The cow work begins again in the early part of Sept., when several weeks are required to brand the late calves. The old cows and bulls are gathered and marketed, calves are weaned, the breeding bulls are gathered and brought to the small winter pastures maintained for the purpose, and the breeding cows are moved from the Summer to the winter pasture. This Fall work is completed and the chuck wagon pulls into headquarters about the middle of December. 9 "During the Winter months the cowboys are put to handling and breaking weanling [foals?] until about April 1st. Sufficient breeding mares are being maintained on the King county ranch to produce replacement horses in the remudas of both ranches. The mares are chiefly of the Quarter or Steeldust breeding.

Library of Congress

There are now (1938, about 90 in number. These mares are being mated with steeldust and government thoroughbred stallions. The foals are handled and fed every Winter, from the time they are weanlings until they are three years old. They are ridden lightly during the Winter, as twos and threes, and a very small percentage of them pitch when mounted. The horses will develop and be quite gentle, going into the remuda for steady riding and work in the Spring when they are three years old. The fillies, at this age, are bred and take their place with the breeding mare bands, either as addition or replacements.

“Selection and culling must go on in horse breeding, the same as in any kind of livestock, if progress is to be made and the desired results obtained. Proper handling and taming are essential, as well as proper feeding for development. The Four Six ranches are raising horses, primarily, to meet their needs for cow work. But their purpose is to try to produce a horse that will meet with a good market demand when a surplus is on hand. All horses are branded with an [' ?] on the left shoulder. The aim is for the L on the left shoulder of a horse, like the '6666' on the cattle, to signify merit.

“The King county ranch maintains a headquarters, where lives the foreman or superintendent. In addition, there is maintained 10 four sub-headquarters or camps, at convenient locations,, each of which is in charge of a man commonly referred to as a 'camp man' or 'line rider'. Each line rider is assigned certain pasture fence to line ride and make inspections, also to see that ample water and salt is provided for the cattle, and in general to look after the cattle in his section. Any repairs on fence or windmills and, in fact, any other work which he cannot take care of alone he reports to the ranch foreman, who orders the needed help to assist from the fencing crew, the windmiller, the cow outfit, or farming crew, as may be most expedient.

“On the King county ranch there are about 750 acres maintained in farms, which are operated primarily for production of feed for cattle and horses. The farms are terraced to aid in holding moisture and preventing erosion.

Library of Congress

"The main crops grown are Kaffir, Mile, [Hegari?], Red-top Sorghum and oats. Some wheat and [sudan?] grass are also grown, chiefly for grazing. Trench silos, in which Red-top Sorghum mainly is stored as a reserve feed supply, are being used extensively.

"Sufficient hogs are raised and fattened on each of the ranches to provide bacon, hams, lard and other pork products the year around. A few cows are milked to provide milk, cream and butter. A flock of sheep is also maintained, which more than pays for its keeping in mutton and wool. Poultry and eggs are produced on each ranch. Therefore, the bulk of our food supply for the employees is home grown, and they are supplied with pork, mutton, beef and fowl for their meat diet.

"[We?] insist on the cooks varying the diet and that the food shall be well cooked. Men can't work unless properly nourished. 11 "Dixon Creek ranch contains 107,112 acres, operated mainly as a steer ranch. Fewer employees are required on this Four Six ranch. A foreman, two camp men, and three or four additional employees take care of the work there in an excellent manner, except when cattle delivery is made. Then a few extra hands are generally supplied from the King county ranch. A remuda of about 35 horses is kept there for the cow work. Normally, about 8,000 steers, composed of yearlings, twos and threes, are grazed on the Dixon Creek ranch, through the late Spring to early Fall. With the disposal of the threes in the Fall, about 5,500 remains to be wintered.

"In this day of demand for baby beef and small cuts, one naturally wonders, particularly when taking economy into consideration, why the Four Six ranches continue to carry their steers past the yearling stage, and even to three-year-olds, before marketing them. This practice has proven successful on the Four Six ranches. It is so because of the location of the ranches. They are well suited for the peculiar practice. The King county ranch, with its wide variety of vegetation and good winter protection resulting from broken country and mosquito timber, is especially [adapted?] for a breeding ranch. There, besides buffalo, [grama?], mosquito and [tobose?] grasses, which affords the main range feed during Spring and Summer, 'faelaree', wild rye and other vegetation generally supplement the

Library of Congress

former during the Fall and Winter months. Therefore, supplementary feeding on the King county ranch is seldom necessary, except in caring for the bulls, it being found advisable to feed them cottonseed cake during the Winter and Spring. 12 This is necessary in order to have the bulls in the best of physical condition when they are turned out with the cow herd between the first and tenth of May.

“Dixon Creek ranch, on the other hand, is an open, rolling country, with no [winter?] vegetation growing during the Fall and Winter months. Furthermore, on account of the winters being more severe, and the range lacking in protection, Dixon Creek is [regarded?] as better for steers than cows. Under our system, the Dixon Creek range will carry three crops of steers - yearlings, twos and threes - and by this method we utilize the two ranges fully.

“The coming twos and threes are fed cottonseed cake to supplement the dried or cured [grass?], buffalo, [sedge?] and red bunch grass during the winter and early Spring months. These cattle go through the winter in good shape with practically no death loss. Thus it is evident Dixon Creek is exceptionally well adapted to growing and developing steers. Whereas, it is not so well adapted to the maintenance of a breeding herd economically.

“It is the [desire?] of the Four Six ranches to constantly improve their herd. During the past five years, the present management, in order to effect greater uniformity in the herd, has annually purchased bulls from the same herd. These bulls are bought at weaning time and delivered to [us?] about Nov. 1st. They spend their first winter on the King county ranch and are carried, during this period, under pasture conditions with a supplement of cottonseed cake.

“In the later part of April, when the bulls are turned out 13 with the cows, the older and better half of the young bulls, now yearlings, are also turned in with the cow herd. The younger of the young bulls are held back in a trap, or small pasture, until the later part of

Library of Congress

July, and then they are turned in with the cows. Thus they reinforce the old bulls, for the later part of the breeding season.

“This [descent?] will convey an idea of the development and present operation of the Four Six ranches, and show the vast change which has taken place during the lifetime of S.B.Burnett. From the open and free range, on which grazed and roamed the Texas Longhorn practically at their will, when twice each year the ranchers united in a general roundup to separate their respective brands, when the Longhorn bred / guided and aided by nature only, when a rancher could only guess how many cattle carried his brand, but knew the number should be able to roundup, if he traveled over all the range for 100 or miles in each direction from his headquarters. Texas has witnessed the transformation to the modern ranches with the best of livestock.

“Texas was the greatest cattle state during the early days, and has continued to remain in the fore as a cattle state. Today, within the borders of Texas, are the greatest cattle ranches in size and modernness, in the U.S. On these ranches are produced the highest grade of cattle.

“The foundation for the superb herds and ranches were laid by such men as [Samuel?] Burk Burnett, [?].T.Waggoner,, [?].D.Reynolds, Winfield Scott, [Cass Edwards?], Charles Goodnight, Rufus King, and others too numerous to mention. 14 “All of these prominent cattlemen were excellent judges of cattle and had a thorough knowledge of how to handle stock. They were capable business men and financiers. They were also far-sighted and perceived the possibilities in Texas, during their early lives. In addition, these men were liberal with their aid to others, particularly to those who served them, likewise to charity.

“[S.B.Burnett?], in his last will and testament, provided for numerous bequests to relatives, friends, and old employees. He left to the city of Forth Worth a down town park, composed of on square block, as a memorial to his son, Burk, Jr. In his later years he made his home in Fort Worth, where he died Jan. 27, 1922, at the age of 73.

Library of Congress

"[W.T.Waggoner?], too, was successful business man and financier, and liberal. Like Burnett, and others, he was fond of livestock. [Either?] one of these men would rather be among his thoroughbred cattle than sit at a banquet table with royalty. Waggoner would crawl a mile, on his hands and knees, to see a beautiful horse or bull. What I say about the fondness of these two men for livestock may be said, more or less, about all the successful cattlemen. [When?] a man has a kind feeling for livestock and enjoys caring for them, he generally is a high type person, one with a keen sense of fairness and liberal.

"During all my many years associated with cattlemen, I have found the worth-while [cattleman?] a dependable and upright man. The attribution with which we often refer to George Washington is very applicable to describe the principal characteristics of the 15 founders of the cattle business in Texas. Those men fought fast and hard when [wrenged?], but were peaceful by nature. They pursued an enemy ruthlessly and would go to the aid of a friend without stint.

"No matter how extensive their other business became, they always found time to give personal attention to their livestock. With oil wells putting forth black gold, sky-scrapers producing cash rentals, bank-stocks returning dividends and money being realized from many other sources by these men, they could not be attracted or enticed away from their livestock.

"Burk Burnett visited his ranch regularly and rode his mount over the range. He was more contented while at the ranch than in the counting room. [W.T.Waggoner?] was the same. Just put him [on?] a saddle horse and riding over the range, then he was in his glory.

"Waggoner had a favorite saddle horse which he kept long after he and the horse were to decrepit to perform with a saddle. He never visited the ranch without petting the old horse.

"An incident took place one time which was humorous to those present. Burnett was at Waggoner's to cut out some cattle he had traded for. Burk desired to assist in the cutting,

Library of Congress

but there was only one horse left in the remuda, and this animal was Waggoner's private mount. Waggoner had issued positive orders that no one should ride his private mount. Well, Burk violated the order. He mounted the horse and assisted in cutting out. An hour or so later Waggoner appeared on the scene. When he saw Burk riding his pet, Waggoner puffed up like a pigeon, which was plainly discernable to 16 all present, but Tom never said a word. After a [bit?] of time, Burk rode over to Tom and said:

"Tom, this is a mighty good mount, it is a very easy saddle'.

"By God, it ought to be, no one but a good hossman has ever ridden it, and only two different ones at that. That's me and Theodore Roosevelt. You are the first greener that hoss has carried. Damn it, I reckon you wont kill the hoss if I let you ride it the rest of the day, so go on with your work'.

"Burnett had a team of beautiful horses which were real steppers. He named them Jim and Baily, because he bought the animals from Jim Baily. This team was driven by Burnett until they were too old for practical use and then retired to pasture, and the buggy and harness were kept intact. Burnett never visited the ranch, but what he would visit the team.

"These old rawhides were just as staunch with their human friends as they were with the [best?].